

H. Res. 294

In the House of Representatives, U. S.,

July 16, 2007.

Whereas the Kingdom of Lesotho is a parliamentary constitutional monarchy that has been an independent country since 1966;

Whereas Lesotho is a low-income country with a gross national income per capita of \$960 and 50 percent of the population lives below the poverty line;

Whereas, in Lesotho, the HIV prevalence is estimated at 23 percent for the total adult population and 56 percent for pregnant women between the ages of 25 and 29, and the current average life expectancy at birth is estimated to be 34.4 years;

Whereas the Kingdom of Lesotho, referred to by some as the “Kingdom in the Sky”, was a strong public supporter of the end of apartheid in South Africa, and the Government of Lesotho granted political asylum to a number of refugees from South Africa during the apartheid era;

Whereas the Government of Lesotho has demonstrated a strong commitment to ruling justly, investing in people, ensuring economic freedom, and controlling corruption;

Whereas the Government of Lesotho has been named eligible by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) for a Compact of financial assistance that, as currently pro-

posed, would strongly focus on improving and safeguarding the health of the people of Lesotho, in addition to supporting projects for sustainable water resource management and private sector development;

Whereas, historically, a married woman in Lesotho was considered a legal minor during the lifetime of her husband, was severely restricted in economic activities, was unable to enter into legally binding contracts without her husband's consent, and had no standing in civil court;

Whereas legislation elevating the legal status of married women and providing property and inheritance rights to women in Lesotho was introduced as early as 1992;

Whereas for years women's groups, nongovernmental organizations, the Federation of Women Lawyers, officials of the Government of Lesotho, and others in Lesotho have pushed for passage of legislation strengthening rights of married women;

Whereas in a letter to the Government of Lesotho in September 2006, the chief executive officer of the MCC stated that gender inequality is a constraint on economic growth and poverty reduction and is related to the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, and that inattention to issues of gender inequality could undermine the potential impact of the Compact proposed to be entered into between the MCC and the Government of Lesotho;

Whereas the MCC's advocacy of gender equity played a supportive role in the enactment of the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act in the Kingdom of Lesotho, which effectively eliminated "de jure" discrimination against women in the customary law system;

Whereas the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act was passed by the Parliament of Lesotho and enacted into law in November 2006;

Whereas the MCC has already provided assistance to further full and meaningful implementation of the new law; and

Whereas the MCC has promulgated and is currently implementing a new gender policy to integrate gender into all phases of the development and implementation of the Compact between the MCC and the Government of Lesotho: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) applauds the enactment of the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act by the Kingdom of Lesotho;

(2) lauds the Kingdom of Lesotho for demonstrating its commitment to improve gender equity;

(3) encourages the Kingdom of Lesotho to continue its effort to ensure gender equity; and

(4) commends the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) for developing and implementing policies to advance gender equity in the Kingdom of Lesotho and other countries eligible for financial assistance from the MCC.

Attest:

Clerk.